/18 cont./

III.

Education -- The Educated -- The Educators

565 While the upper class in Abkhazia enjoyed privilege and
566 power, the situation of the lower classes was one of great oppression; /19/ the batoni (master, feudal lord) looked upon his subject, his slave, as a commodity; he could sell or pawn him
[567] according to circumstances. However, even after the abolition of slavery, the position of the peasantry did not improve, due to
[579] the fact that the nobility did not cease from robbery and pillage and plunder until the most recent times.

565 Under such a state of affairs, all the peasantry could do
608 was to resign itself to feudal conditions and try, wherever possible, to get protection. The best method lay in the custom of adoption, or the rearing of the sons of the aristocrats by the peasants. Thanks to this custom, the aristocrats themselves were strengthened, for in this way they gained in the peasants their most faithful supporters, while at the same time freeing their wives from the onerous duty of bringing up and feeding their own children. This is the reason that in all Abkhazia there is not a single peasant who has not reared one or several princes and nobles; as a consequence of this custom, hardly one per cent of the nobles have been nursed at their own mother's breast.

Before the beginning of childbirth in a family of the aristocracy (didebuli), on the one hand relatives and acquaintances and, on the other hand, the future foster-mothers of the expected child, accompanied by their husbands and female relatives in order to be able to bear the newborn foster-child back to their village with due ceremony, begin to gather around the pregnant
844 woman. During the childbirth, girls from the village also come to
565 visit the expectant mother in order to distract her and to relieve
[533] her sufferings during labor with gay songs and the telling of fables
[538] and fairy tales. The husband is absent during this time. According to the customs of the country, he is not allowed to be present when his wife gives birth and therefore leaves the home. Above

I quote here the following story: "A female slave of a family,
[996] [539] [567] being angry with her masters, took a portion of the dough for *akwakwə̀* destined for the " god " *Got'anùa*, and placing it in a scoop of bitter-gourd (*akwapey*, Geo. *kopo*), hid it in the loft. As usual the family went to bed after the ceremony. But unfortunately for them the offended *Got'anùa* soundly thrashed all of them, using for the purpose the very same scoop in which had been hidden the dough destined for himself. This *gvari* makes propitiatory offerings at the will of sorcerers to *Got'anùa* twice a year, during the night before Christmas and before the Assumption.

Got'anùa, under the name of *Okhvàmuri*, evidently spread throughout Megrelia during the missionaryship of Lamberti.[1]

V. Deities whose Cults have no Fixed Dates

1. *Et-nə̀kha—Àga-nə̀kha*

[996] [823] [982] The sea, like other manifestations of nature, has its own " part of deity ", called *Àga-inkhwə̀* or *àga-intswakhwə̀*. An Abkhaz makes an offering to this deity when he goes to the sea coast for any considerable time. The sea deity is not to be trifled with ; if it is slighted it becomes turbulent, it surges, and punishes the unrespectful. Therefore even the children are forbidden to throw pebbles, or to spit into the sea. The worship of this deity has been preserved in its purest form among the Bzib Abkhasians, namely among the peasantry of the Gudout (Gudaut) district, of the *gvari* of Amp'aràa. It has been described by A. Tch(ukbar), in *Sotrudnik Zakavkazskoy Missii* (" The Collabarator of the Transcaucasian Mission "), 1912, p. 373 sqq., where the deity *Et-nə̀kh-Àga-nə̀kha* is called *Et-nykh Ag-Nykh*. *Àga* denotes sea, *(a)nə̀kh*—" icon." But what does the word *Et* denote ?[2]

2. *Àshkha-intswakhwə̀* (god of mountains)

[803] Mountains also have " their part of God " known under the name of *Àshkha-intswakhwə̀*. *Àshkha* denotes mountain ; *intswakhwə̀*, " his (of the male rational being) part of God." I have pointed out above that the Abkhaz often uses the word *nə̀kha* in the sense of god, which in the Christian faith is understood, or more correctly, translated, as icon. The god of mountains " governs " all the mountains and the beasts inhabiting them. Abkhaz shepherds make offerings to this [233] [825] god twice a year, in the spring when they drive the cattle to the mountains, and in the autumn when they drive them back. To him are subject also mountain game. In order to preserve the game from

[1] A. Lamberti, op. cit., pp. 148-9.

[2] This word manifests a consonance with the Assyro-Babylonian name of the god of the sea, *Ea*. Is this a mere coincidence ?